

BOARD BRIEFS

*News from the New Trier Township High School District 203
Board of Education Regular Meeting
November 15, 2021*

New Trier to Offer Choice in Adviser Room Structure for Class of 2026

Beginning with the Class of 2026, students will have a choice in the type of adviser room structure they prefer as New Trier moves to ensure the Adviser Program meets the District's strategic goal of providing a safe, welcoming climate where all students feel they belong.

Incoming freshmen registering for classes in February will have three choices for adviser room structure: no preference, mixed grouping, or single gender. The Board affirmed the District's proposed change after hearing about the benefits of choice from adviser faculty who have been leading the District's study of the Adviser Program.

New Trier began its Adviser Program in 1928 as a way to promote a four-year connection between the school and families, between students and adults, and between students and their peers. While many schools have homerooms, New Trier's adviser room is unique. Students spend four years with the same group of students, and their adviser is the first stop for students and their families to help navigate the school and have a consistent home-school link. Adviser rooms are meant to create connections and a sense of belonging, and to help students with their personal and academic growth.

The District's current examination of the Adviser Program began several years ago when the school engaged an outside firm to survey stakeholders to identify strengths of the program and areas in which it could improve. While the existing single-gender structure (boys' and girls' adviser rooms) was not a specific topic of the survey at that time, it emerged as a recurring topic in focus groups discussing the Adviser Program.

Some participants said the gender-specific structure is unrealistic because society is made of mixed groupings, and that it is unwelcoming and marginalizes some students, including those who do not identify with a specific gender or who are gender nonconforming. Other participants saw benefits in the single-gender structure, including the ability for students to be more comfortable having some conversations in gender-specific settings and allowing for a unique space in an otherwise mixed-gender environment.

This January, New Trier surveyed junior and senior students specifically about the gender structure of adviser room and found nearly an even split between those who would prefer a single-gender grouping (52%) and a mixed grouping (48%) if they were to start over as freshmen. Even among those who said they preferred single gender, many indicated students

should have a choice. Advisers were also split, with the vast majority indicating they would continue to serve as advisers regardless of the structure.

Most of New Trier's sender districts have some form of an adviser room at the middle school level with mixed groupings, so incoming freshmen will have experience with that structure. No matter what structure students choose, the core of the Adviser Program will remain the same, providing a community and home-school connection as well as opportunities for service, personal reflection, self-advocacy, goal-setting, and preparation for important transitions.

Incoming freshmen will make their choices at registration in February, be advised of their adviser room structure in May, and find out the name of their adviser in July. Click for the [New Trier Adviser Program presentation](#).

[New Trier to Offer Full Athletics, KW Opportunities During Construction](#)

Students will have access to a full array of Kinetic Wellness classes and Athletic opportunities during the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic project, which begins this December and will be completed by August 2023.

Assistant Athletic Director Jim Burnside and Kinetic Wellness Department Chair Andy Butler told the Board about how they will accommodate classes, practices, and competitions once the Gates Gymnasium is taken out of commission over winter break.

New Trier has adapted spaces at both campuses for students participating in Kinetic Wellness classes and Athletics. For example, the Bickert gymnasiums at the Winnetka Campus, which are not part of the project, will be extensively used for classes and practices. Competitions can also take place at both campuses, with the Northfield Main Gym having undergone recent upgrades such as floor replacement and new basketball backstops.

The District also is being creative with its use of space to serve student programs. The Winnetka Campus wrestling room will serve as a temporary weight room, and a temporary cardio room will be installed in one of the larger rooms in the lower level of the Bickert gyms. The strength and conditioning program already had adapted to an outside space at Northfield and will continue to use that space when weather allows. One of the gyms will include a climbing wall for outdoor education.

New Trier will email families and staff next month about changes to campus logistics after winter break, including the closure of the East Door as a student/visitor entry. Click for the [Board presentation on the project](#).

Board Approves 2nd Bid Package for East Side Project

The Board approved the 2nd of 3 bid packages for the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project. The bids, totaling \$20,895,274, include seven construction trades and are an estimated 41% of the construction costs. The remainder of the project is out to bid now, and the results will be presented to the Board at the December meeting.

The District established a \$75.3 million budget for the project in February 2021, using existing resources provided to the District by its taxpayers without the need for a referendum to increase property taxes. The budget was established before recent inflationary trends and supply chain issues, and the District has worked diligently to design a high-quality and long-lasting facility for the benefit of the students and the community while keeping as close to the original budget as possible.

Approximately \$34,945,871 of the total budget is currently committed. The Board will receive a comprehensive update on the construction budget estimate in December, after the final bids are received. Click for the [memo on the project's 2nd bid package](#).

Gates Gym to be Commemorated During *December to Remember*

As New Trier prepares to break ground on the East Side project, the school is honoring the legacy of the 1928 Gates Gymnasium in a series of events called *A December to Remember*. They include:

- **December 4, 2021 at 12 p.m. - Open House and Commemoration Ceremony**
New Trier will host a Commemoration Ceremony in the Stage Gym on Saturday, Dec. 4 at 12 p.m. Alumni and guests are invited to stay for the girls and boys varsity basketball games beginning at 12:30 pm. Attendees can also tour the entire Winnetka Campus, which was renovated on the west side in 2017, and view drawings of the new construction. Light refreshments and a commemorative giveaway will be provided while supplies last.
- **December 12, 2021 at 3 p.m. - New Trier Winter Music Festival**
The New Trier Music & Theatre Department's annual concert dates back to 1918 and will be held in the Gates Gymnasium one last time on Sunday, Dec. 12. New Trier's talented bands, orchestras, and choirs all participate. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, capacity may be limited to performers and their families, but New Trier will livestream the event.
- **December 16, 2021 at 5:45 p.m. - Athletic Hall of Honor Induction and Alumni Night**
New Trier will induct its third class into the Athletic Department Hall of Honor on Thursday, Dec. 16. The inductees will be honored in the Gates Gymnasium between the girls (5:45 p.m.) and boys varsity basketball games (7:30 p.m.) against Evanston High School, which will be the last official games played in the space.

More information can be found on the [December to Remember web page](#).

Board Approves 5-Year Contract with Support Professionals Association

The Board approved a 5-year agreement with the New Trier Education Support Professionals Association (NTESPA) that will allow the District to continue to recruit, retain, and develop highly qualified support professionals in balance with the District's finances.

The NTESPA represents approximately 180 staff members that serve a vital role in the school, including campus security, classroom teaching assistants, office support staff, technology support, registered nurses, and athletic trainers. The District began negotiations with the association in June.

The contract provides a new salary structure for these employees, who are compensated on an hourly basis. The prior contract covering 2015-2021 fixed wages at a negotiated amount, which did not keep up with inflation and resulted in the District ranking among the bottom of peer districts in pay for these key positions, making it difficult to continue to attract highly qualified applicants.

The new agreement departs from a traditional pay schedule and sets competitive starting wages for new employees, while providing experience adjustments for existing employees. For example, the new starting wage for security staff members is \$19/hour and \$20/hour for Instructional Assistants (classroom aides). These positions both previously started at under \$17/hour, making it difficult to hire highly qualified candidates when neighboring districts and other businesses were offering much more competitive salaries.

Other contract provisions include an increase in tuition reimbursement for continuing education to \$1,500 and a limited number of \$5,000 grants for support staff studying to become teachers; flexibility in the use of benefit days while reducing the use of unpaid leave; the ability to institute a reduction in force during the school year if needed rather than waiting until the conclusion of the school year; clarifying support staff expectations during snow days or remote learning days; establishing regular monthly meetings between the NTESPA and the District to enhance collaboration; and encouraging support staff involvement in strategic planning.

The wages of support professionals represent about 15% of the total salaries and benefits for District employees, and the increases are consistent with the District's long-term financial projections. Click for the [memo on the new NTESPA contract](#).

2021-2022 School Year Update: COVID Mitigation, Block Schedule

New Trier students, staff, and families should continue to practice COVID-19 mitigation measures to keep the school and community safe amid a recent rise in cases, Superintendent Paul Sally told the Board.

Sally said the school continues to be in a strong position and can run full in-person classes and activities because of high vaccination rates among students and staff and mitigation factors

such as enhanced ventilation and staying home when sick. However, he said the school needs to remain vigilant amid a recent increase in cases in New Trier Township and across the state, including breakthrough cases among those who received their vaccines several months ago.

He encouraged all students, even those vaccinated, to take advantage of the school's free weekly Shield saliva testing as one way to help keep everyone safe. Sally also encouraged staff and community members to get booster shots when they are eligible.

[Block Schedule Study Continues](#)

New Trier continues to analyze and refine the current school year's block schedule as a schoolwide committee gathers data for a schedule recommendation for 2022-2023.

In October, teachers surveyed their own students about how the block schedule was working in their classrooms. They then used this feedback during professional development days to make adjustments to their learning environment and curriculum.

For the next phase of study, the committee will survey students, staff, and parents about the block schedule and conduct focus groups before making its recommendations.

[Other News from the November 15 Meeting:](#)

- The Board approved the initial [2022-2023 school year calendar](#), which includes school start and end dates, holidays, and breaks for the year. The calendar was approved so families can plan for days off, but it does not include details of Institute Days, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Early Dismissal/Late Start weekends, final exams, or grading days. The District is waiting to schedule those days until after a committee presents recommendations for the block schedule. A full 2022-2023 calendar is expected to be presented to the Board in February.
- New Trier is planning to run its Summer School programs fully in-person in 2022, marking a shift from the last two years when programming was either mostly remote (2020) or a mix of remote and in-person (2021). Because of the construction project on the Winnetka Campus, the majority of New Trier's 2022 Summer School classes and sports will take place on the Northfield Campus, with a few exceptions. Registration will once again take place via PowerSchool, a more streamlined process introduced last year. The District also will eliminate the \$50 Summer School registration fee this year. Click for the full [Summer School memo](#).
- Associate Superintendent Chris Johnson presented the District's tentative tax levy for 2021. The levy is the primary funding source for the District's 2022-2023 budget, and the revenue it generates funds New Trier's excellent faculty and staff, broad curriculum, student services, and extracurricular programs that are the cornerstone of New Trier's reputation for excellence. The District's ability to increase its tax extension is limited by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act to the Consumer Price Index or 5%, whichever is less. The 2020 CPI was 1.4% and was used in the calculation of the tax extension

(exclusive of new property). Johnson reported that he expects the New Trier portion of the property tax bill to rise by 1.4% on average for property owners. Click for the [levy presentation](#).

The New Trier Board of Education generally meets on the third Monday of each month, with the business portion of the meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Full videos of Board meetings are available online at <https://nths.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/BOARD+OF+EDUCATION/>

Information about Board of Education members, upcoming meetings, agendas, minutes, and other documents are available at <https://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/boardofeducation>